



THE LEGEND *of* DRYAS



MARION E. MOODIE



Courtesy of Canadian National Parks Dept.
DRYAS OCTOPETALA
The Rock Rose

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FAR UP on a bare, rocky mountain-side, thousands of feet above a beautiful valley, which was in its turn thousands of feet above the level of the sea, lived a lonely pine-tree. Many years had passed since the snowy autumn day, when the wind which so fiercely shook the pine forest on another mountain, breaking branches, uprooting trees, and scattering the cone seeds far and wide, had in its mad flight carried one little seed so high up these bare rocks, and dropped it in a sheltered corner which had been storing up every bit of soil it could gather and keep safe from the sweeping of the wild winds. When the early spring sunshine melted the snow on the mountain side, and warmth and moisture came to the seed, it started to grow, and after a few summers had passed, the little pine tree was tall enough to look over the rocks that sheltered it to the bleak mountain side and the great ranges on the other side of the Valley. Then began a long struggle to carry out its hopes of being a tall, straight, noble tree, whose branches should stretch out covered with clusters of firm sweet needles, through which the soft winds would

whisper. Deeper and deeper it thrust its roots into the cracks of the rocks, and stouter and stronger grew the sheltered trunk, but the cruel winter winds beat and bent and twisted the struggling branches, stripping the needles from them again and again, till the tree grew into an odd, stunted, misshapen thing, only strong and brave with a sweet, true heart in its rough trunk. It was lonely up there on the mountain with neither bush, nor tree, nor flower for company, and the pine began to talk to the summer winds about it, and beg them to carry some seeds up to the sheltered corner, where the soil was gathering faster now about the roots of the lonely tree. The summer winds promised to speak to the mountain fairies about it, as the wild autumn gales were needed to carry the tiny seeds so high, and who could tell what seeds would grow at all in such a bleak place; so the pine tree waited, and dreamed through the summer days of the time when some fresh beautiful plants should grow in the cracks and along the ledges of the old rocks.

Now the fairies lived farther down the mountain and seldom came up as far as the lonely pine, but they knew all about it, and what a hard time the pine tree had. So they had many talks among themselves and looked at all the plants on the mountains, and in the

valley around them, but could not find one that pleased them to plant beside the little pine.

"It should be like the rose," said one fairy, "for that is the sweetest flower to be found in any land."

"I would have it like the oak," said another, who had not been long in the mountains, and often thought of the oak trees in the forests where he used to live, "for it is true and brave as the pine tree itself."

"It must be low growing," they said, "there is not room in that sheltered corner for another tree or bush, and the pine tree has had a long fight for its place, but a little flower might grow on the narrow ledge of rock or creep around the roots of the old pine."

And the youngest fairy said, "Let it be a white flower, pure and sweet, with a heart of gold."

So they gave the autumn winds a message, and "Bring us," said they, "leaves from the oak trees of the old woods; wild roses from the prairies, for they are hardy, yet sweet and dainty too; seeds with feathery wings that the breezes may carry them to other ledges, and stems with rough warm covering to protect them from the bitter cold, for our plant must live from year to year."

Late in the autumn there came a night when the east wind sighed through the branches of the pine tree, and whispered of the coming storm. Stronger and stronger it blew, till the pine shook and its branches swished and swayed in the blast. By-and-by there came a rustling round its trunk, and when the wind had passed and morning came the little sheltered corner held a number of leaves. Not pine needles torn from the branches this time, but oak leaves, torn and withered by the storm.

Next night the wind began again, but this time it blew sometimes one way, and sometimes another, and a tiny grey feather drifted on to the ledge.

As the night went on the north wind blew stronger and the storm swept down the mountain, the wind shrieking and whistling among the rocks, and bending and battering the branches of the pine tree till they were nearly broken. As day dawned the pine saw a few white rose petals lying on the withering oak leaves at its feet. Just eight of them, and all crumpled, poor little tender things, and then the snow began to fall and soon the sheltered corner was hidden by a soft white covering, till the spring sun should come to melt it, and send the streams trickling and rushing down the mountainside to the valley below.

All winter the fairies were busy, and when spring came they visited the ledge often, watch-

ing and tending every sign of growth on the tiny patch of earth, coaxing some little blades of grass that came up first, and rejoicing when a little brown tuft of roots sent out first one crimped edged leaf and then another. Green as the pine needles they were on the upper side, and grey underneath as the old mountain itself, and they held close to the warm brown roots and braved the spring storms, till one by one they grew to be quite a strong little plant.

The summer came, and the warm sun shone, and soft breezes blew on the pine tree and the little stranger beside it, till one day a round bud thickly covered with warm brown hairs appeared, and late in July opened to the old pine tree and the eager fairies a sweet white, eight-petalled rose, with a heart of gold. It was not long till more flowers came, and the little plant grew bigger and spread along the narrow ledge, and when the summer was over and the seeds ripened ready for the autumn winds to carry them to other ledges and corners of the bare old mountain, each seed had a silver grey plume to float with.

So the brave old pine rejoiced in the sweet-faced little friend who had come to the sheltered corner, and the little plant proved as modest, and true and strong to bear the storms and cold, as the fairies had planned and hoped for. The fairy who longed for the old woods and oak trees named it "Dryas"; but the youngest fairy called it the "Rock Rose."



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A Song of the West

Oh! wind that comes out of the West,

The land of the sunset skies,
Where far o'er yon mountain's crest
Those glorious colors rise.

You bring me the fragrance of pine,

The coolness of mountain snow,
The music of falling streams
By hills where the lillies grow.

Oh! wind that comes out of the West,

You sigh on your way to the plain,
"The mountain land is best,
Will you not come back again?"

Glow skies with your golden light,

Blow softly dear wind from the hill,
For my heart has a longing tonight
That only the West can fill.

—Marion E. Moodie.



